

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 11909

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MPOL, NATO, IT

SUBJECT: ITALIAN ARMY RESTRUCTURING

REF: USNATO 4350

1. ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF ANDREA CUCINO RECENTLY OUTLINED ITALIAN ARMY RESTRUCTURING PLANS TO THE PARLIAMENT. IN THE AUGUST 10 EDITION OF IL SECOLO D'ITALIA, THE PROJECT WAS DESCRIBED IN SOME DETAIL.

2. TWO OBJECTIVES ARE IN VIEW: REORGANIZATION OF THE ITALIAN ARMY TO CREATE AN EFFECTIVE AND MOBILE FORCE IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESENT THREATS AND CONSTRAINTS, AND TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL RESTRUCTURING IS ENVISAGED, INCLUDING THE REGROUPING AND CONSOLIDATION OF SOME COMMANDS, LOGISTICS AND TRAINING FACILITIES. DRAFT CALLS, BEGINNING IN JANUARY '76, WILL BE ISSUED MONTHLY RATHER THAN QUARTERLY, WITH CONSCRIPTS IMMEDIATELY JOINING UNITS WITH WHICH THEY WILL SERVE THE ENTIRE TERM OF SERVICE AND WHERE THEY WILL RECEIVE ALL OF THEIR TRAINING.

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3. THE RESTRUCTURED ITALIAN ARMY WILL REPRESENT A REDUCTION OF 32 PERCENT IN TANKS - PRIMARILY OBSOLETE M-47'S; A DROP OF 35 PERCENT IN ARTILLERY (LARGELY RESULTING FROM ELIMINATION OF 105MM HOWITZERS, TO BE REPLACED IN THE SHORT TERM BY THE M-109 155 HOWITZER, AND IN THE MIDDLE TERM AUGMENTED BY 155/39'S (FH-70'1); A 50 PERCENT INCREASE IN ANTI-TANK WEAPONS (NOT IMMEDIATELY, HOWEVER); OVER THE MEDIUM TERM, A BUILDUP IN ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS TO ABOUT 50 PERCENT OF REQUIREMENTS; GRADUAL UPGRADING OF MOTOR TRANSPORT RESOURCES.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE RESTRUCTURED ITALIAN ARMY WILL, OF COURSE, DEPEND HEAVILY UPON THE AVAILABILITY OF MODERN EQUIPMENT. ECONOMIES FROM REDUCED PERSONNEL WILL LIKELY BE LOST TO INFLATION AND THE ACQUISITION OF NEW WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT WILL REQUIRE ADDITIONAL FUNDING. THE ARMY GENERAL STAFF HAS PROPOSED AN EXTRAORDINARY FINANCING LAW TO THE PARLIAMENT (685 BILLION LIRE - ABOUT ONE BILLION DOLLARS), SIMILAR TO THE RECENT TEN YEAR SHIP CONSTRUCTION LEGISLATION APPROVED FOR THE NAVY, TO PROVIDE THE WHEREWITHAL.

5. THE ARMY'S "RESTRUCTURING" HAS IN FACT BEGUN WITH A DECREASE OF OVER 50 (PERHAPS AS MUCH AS 80) BATTALION SIZED UNITS. WHEN COMPLETELY IMPLEMENTED, PRESENT PLANS CALL FOR AN ARMY OF APPROXIMATELY 24 BRIGADES (DOWN FROM 36).

6. ROME DAO HAS REPORTED EXTENSIVELY ON AVAILABLE INFORMATION ABOUT ITALIAN ARMY REORGANIZATION PLANS. USNATO MAY WISH REQUEST IR'S 6-850-0198-75, 6-850-0188-75, 6-850-305-75, 6-850-315-75, WHICH CONTAIN DETAILS OF SOME OF CHANGES IN PROGRESS OR CONTEMPLATED. VOLPE

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